Chapter 13

Tropical Africa and Asia, 1200 - 1500
I. Tropical Lands and Peoples

A. The Tropical Environment

- Tropical zone between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn.
  - Equator in the middle
- Most parts of the tropics get abundant rainfall except the Sahara and northwest India.
  - India influenced by monsoons

Seasons as result of axial tilt of 23.4°.
B. Human Ecosystems

- Humans in the arid areas of the tropics relied on herding and supplemented their diets with grain and vegetables obtained through trade.

- Vast majority of people were farmers and cultivated various crops depending on the conditions of soil, climate, and water
  - Sub-Saharan Africa used shifting cultivation

Example of Saharan Tuareg caravan.

Example of rice paddies in southeast Asia.
C. Water Systems and Irrigation

- Areas of South and Southeast Asia with ample water supplies transformed the environment and supported dense populations.
- Most farmers abandoned their fields every few years and cleared new areas.
- Tropics had uneven distribution of rainfall during the year.
- In India, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka, governments mobilized vast resources to construct and maintain large irrigation and water control projects.

Example of terracing rice paddies in India.

Abundant water resources allowed farmers in southeast Asia to produce enough food to support an expanding population.
D. Mineral Resources

• Used iron for agricultural implements, weapons, and needles.
• Metalworking and food producing systems mobilized labor and produced surpluses that supported powerful states and profitable commercial systems.
II. New Islamic Empires

A. Mali in the Western Sudan

- Islam spread through gradual peaceful conversion.
- Sundiata established the kingdom of Mali and controlled trade routes and gold mines.
- Mansa Kankan Musa established new Quranic schools and mosques.
  - He demonstrated his fabulous wealth on his pilgrimage to Mecca.
- Mali collapsed in the 15th century because of rebellions and attacks.

Kingdom of Mali controlled the trade routes of the southern Sahara especially along the Niger River.
The famous trading city of Timbuktu on the Niger River.
The people of Timbuktu today live in modern mud brick dwellings similar to ancient mud brick dwellings.
Mansa Kankan Musa brought 610 pounds of gold on his pilgrimage to Mecca.
Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan Berber, Islamic scholar, and traveler. His journeys lasted for 29 years and covered 75,000 miles (more than Marco Polo). He is often considered one of the greatest travelers ever.
B. The Delhi Sultanate in India

- The Sultan Iltutmish established the Delhi Sultanate as a Muslim state.
- His daughter Raziya was a talented ruler but was driven by men from the throne.
- The Delhi Sultanate carried out a policy of aggressive territorial expansion that was accompanied by Tughluq’s policy of religious toleration toward Hindus until his successor began to persecute Hindus.
- Later the sultanate was destroyed when Timur sacked Delhi in 1398.
Taj Mahal was built by emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his third wife. It was completed in 1653 and is the best example of Muslim architecture in India.
III. Indian Ocean Trade

A. Monsoon Mariners

- Trade was stimulated by collapse of overland trade routes and prosperity of Europe, Asian, and African states.
- In the Red and Arabian seas trade was carried on dhows.
- Junks dominated the Indian Ocean trade.
- Trade was decentralized and cooperative, with various regions supplying particular goods.
Traditional Arab sailing vessel, the dhow, was used for cargo and passenger transport from the Arabian Sea to India.
Superior sail, hull, and rudder technology made Chinese junks the most seaworthy vessel of their time. They sailed from India to southeast Asia on monsoon winds.
Most people stayed in their villages generation after generation, but people on the coast experienced a large amount of cultural diffusion as a result of the dhow and junks.
B. Africa: The Swahili Coast and Zimbabwe

- By 1500 30-40 East African city states were participating in Indian Ocean trade.
- Kilwa were famous exporters of gold that was mined in or around the inland kingdom whose capital was Great Zimbabwe.
- The city’s economy rested on agriculture, cattle herding, and trade.
- The city declined due to an ecological crisis brought on by deforestation and overgrazing.
Royal Enclosure in the city of Great Zimbabwe where the gold trade passed on the Zambezi River. It was the size and shape of a football stadium with 17’ thick and 32’ tall exterior walls.
Swahili gold trading system.
C. Arabia: Aden and the Red Sea

- Aden had enough rainfall to produce wheat for export.
- Its location made it a central transit point for trade.
- Trade allowed the people of the Indian Ocean Basin to live in peace.
- Violence did break out when Christian Ethiopia fought with Muslims of the Red Sea Coast over control of trade.
Aden benefitted from monsoon wind rainfall and its convenient stopover location for trade with India.
Modern day city of Aden.
D. India: Gujarat and the Malabar Coast

- Gujarat exported cotton textiles and indigo in return for gold and silver.
- Dominated by Muslims and was a huge manufacturing center.
- Calicut and other cities along the Malabar Coast exported cotton textiles and spices and served as clearing houses for long distance trade.
- The cities formed a loose confederation where there was tolerance of other religious and ethnic groups.
The Indian state of Gujarat was a manufacturing center and a part of the Indian Ocean trading system controlled by Muslims. They exported cotton and indigo for gold and silver.
Malabar Coast duplicated Gujarat’s importance in trade and manufacturing.
E. Southeast Asia: The Rise of Malacca

- The Strait of Malacca is the principal passage from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea.
- In the 14th century a gang of Chinese pirates preyed upon the strait under the control of the Java based kingdom of Majapahit.
- In 1407 Ming forces crushed the pirates and the Muslim ruler of Malacca took advantage of this to exert his domination over the strait and to make Malacca into a major port and a center of trade.
The Strait of Malacca was the principal passage into the South China Sea. Served as the meeting point for traders from India and China.
Modern day city of Malacca.
IV. Social and Cultural Change

A. Architecture, Learning, and Religion

- Commercial contacts and the spread of Islam led to a variety of changes.
- Islam brought literacy to the African peoples and development of the Urdu language.
  - new language that combined Persian and Hindi influence
- Islam brought the study of Islamic law and administration of Greek science, math, and medicine.
- Islam spread peacefully, without forced conversion.
- Islam however, was changed by each individual society that it entered.

Spread of Islam as a result of trading networks. Largely spread peacefully and increased literacy.
The Sacred Mosque (Grand Mosque), in Mecca, is the largest mosque in the world; it can accommodate up to four million and is one of the largest annual gatherings of people in the world.
B. Social and Gender Distinctions

- Gap between elites and the common people widened.
- Slavery increased in both Africa and India.
- Slaves were trained in specific skills and the price of slaves was quite low due to the large amount of slaves.
- Restrictions of women were eased somewhat in Hindu societies.
- However, their status was usually determined by their male masters.
- For instance, Muslims in Mali did not veil and seclude their women.

Example of the abuses of slavery.
Muslim women enjoyed an improved status, yet throughout tropical Africa and Asia women did much of the farm work, toted heavy loads, made clay pots for cooking, and spun yarn.
V. Comparative Perspectives

A. Political Comparisons

- The Mali Empire of the western Sudan arose among African natives who had earlier converted to Islam voluntarily.

- The Delhi Sultanate of India, though providing political unity to northern India, arose through invasion, conquest, and violence, and was intolerant of native religions.
B. Economic and Cultural Comparisons

- Ships in the Arabian Sea to the west of India were dhows.
- Ships to the east traveling to Southeast Asia were the larger junks.
- Life in urban trading centers included more cultural diversity than was experienced close to centers of imperial power.
- To one contemporary observer, citizens of Mali experienced greater social justice than Indians living under the rule of Muhammad ibn Tughluq of the Delhi Sultanate.